Suicide by farmers in Karnataka

*148. DR. VIJAY MALLYA:
SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of farmers who committed suicide in Karnataka since 1998;

(b) the measures taken by Government to prevent such deaths and the number of families paid compensation and the amount of compensation, so paid;

(c) the special incentives announced by Hon'ble Prime Minister for the farmers of Andhra Pradesh and when the same incentives would be extended to farmers of Karnataka, and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether Government have announced any fresh package for the welfare of farmers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) According to information received from the Government of Karnataka the number of farmers who have committed suicide in the State since 1998 is as follows:—

Sl. No.	Year	Figures of State Crime Records Bureau	Figures of Agriculture Department
1.	1998-99	2039	—
2.	1999-2000	2379	—
3.	2000-01	2630	—
4.	2001-02	2505	—
5.	2002-03	2340	—
6.	2003-04	—	708

(b) The State Government has announced a series of measures for the farming community to tide over the situation. With a view to providing relief to the farmers and for revival of agricultural operations, Government of Karnataka announced a relief package comprising the following:—

- Waiver of interest on co-operative short-term loans for Rabi-2002. No penal interest on short-term agricultural loans by cooperatives in future. Rebate on current interest for long-term loans to the farmers at the rate of 5.5% to be reimbursed by the Government provided the farmers pay the remaining interest on 9%.
- To write off outstanding loan and interest on failed wells.
- Full waiver of the outstanding dues to the State Electricity Board from the farmers as on 31.3.2001 in respect of irrigation pump sets.
- Supply of seeds to small and marginal farmers at 50% subsidy in drought affected regions.
- Minimum Support Price operations for Soya-bean, Maize and Sunflower by the Agricultural Marketing Department in collaboration with NAFED.
- Educating farmers with the help of Psychologists and Social scientists about the ill effects of suicide and inculcate among them the confidence to stand up to any adversity.
- Encouragement to farmers to take up alternate crop in places where rainfall has failed and drought resistant varieties of crop can be grown.
- Implementation of Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana in the State from 2000-01 and admissible compensation till Kharif 2003 paid.
- Raitha Samparka Kendras to act as focal points to receive representations and complaints from farmers.

A sum of Rs. 204 lakhs have so far been sanctioned @ Rs. 1,00,000 for each family in respect of farmers who committed suicide during 2003-04. A sum of Rs. 36 lakhs has also been sanctioned and paid to the families of farmers who committed suicide during the current financial year *i.e.* 2004-05.

(c) The Prime Minister visited a few villages in Andhra Pradesh on 1st July, 2004 and directed among other things, that livelihood cover should be provided to one person from each of the suicide affected families there through collaborative action between the Government and the banks. He also announced an assistance of Rs. 50,000 from the PM's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) to the families of persons who committed suicide.

(d) In order to mitigate the distressing situation of farmers due to the problem of indebtness, the Government of India on 18.6.2004 has announced a special package for providing credit related relief to the farmers. Following are the highlights of this announcement:—

- Total flow of agricultural credit which is estimated at Rs. 80,000 crore in 2003-04 is to be enhanced to about Rs. 1,05,000 crore in 2004-05 representing a 30 per cent increase over the flow of credit in the previous year.
- In order to provide credit to tenant farmers and oral lessees, NABARD to facilitate formation and financing of self-help groups of tenant farmers and oral lessees. This exploratory/pilot effort is expected to bring nearly a lakh of tenant farmers, oral lessees and sharecroppers within the banking fold.
- Scales of finance to be reviewed to meet the realistic credit needs of farmers, especially capital-intensive agricultural operations.
- Debt restructuring to be done by commercial banks, RRBs and cooperatives in accordance with the new guidelines to be laid down by RBI/NABARD.

NABARD have issued directions to all State level cooperative institutions for fixation of realistic scales of finance to meet the credit requirements of the farmers for raising crops. Debt restructuring will be done by the commercial banks, RRBs and cooperatives in accordance with the new guidelines as in the following:—

Farmers in distress - Debts of farmers in districts declared as calamity-affected by the State Government concerned will be rescheduled/ restructured. Interest outstanding in the accounts of such borrowers will be clubbed with the principal outstanding on March 31, 2004, and the amount thus arrived at shall be repayable over a period of five years, at current interest rates, including an initial moratorium of two years.

Farmers in arrears - Loans and advances outstanding as on 31st March, 2004 may be rescheduled into a term loan repayable over a period of three to five years at the current rates of interest. Interest outstanding as on 31st March, 2004 may be collected upfront. In case of term loans and previous rescheduled loan where the existing repayment schedule is longer than 3 to 5 years the overdue part of the principal shall only be rescheduled. The remaining part of the loan shall have originally contracted schedule of repayment.

OTS for small and marginal farmers - Loans outstanding of the identified farmers whose accounts have been categorized, as NPAs as on 31.3.2001 would be covered under the scheme, Eligible farmers should apply to bank in writing requesting for such settlement. For accounts declared as NPAs as on 31.3.2001, the settlement amount will be the balance outstanding in the loan account as on 31.3.2001. As regards interest accrued in the account after 31.3.2001, banks will decide upon the amount of compromise to be offered in each individual case subject to the condition that the amount of compromise will not exceed the interest accrued in the account between 31st March, 2001 and date of settlement.

The Reserve Bank of India has also issued standing guidelines to banks for providing relief to the farmers in areas affected by natural calamities. These guidelines envisage *inferalia*:

- Conversion/rescheduling of loans in the event of natural calamity for periods ranging from 3 to 9 years depending upon the successive crop failure/intensity of damage of crops.
- Grant of fresh crop loans to affected farmers.
- Conversion of principal as well as interest due on the existing short term loans to medium term loans.
- Grant of consumption loans.
- Not to compound interest in respect of loans converted/ rescheduled etc.
- Not to charge penal interest in respect of current dues in default.

Tiger reserves in the country

*149. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of tiger reserves in the country;

(b) the funds spent on such reserves in the country in 2003-04;

(c) the efforts being made to upgrade such tiger reserves;

(d) whether any targets have been set for 2004-05; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?